

**SPEECH BY PRESIDENT HALIMAH YACOB  
AT THE HEALTHCARE SERVICES EMPLOYEES' UNION  
BURSARY AWARDS CEREMONY ON SUNDAY, 11 FEBRUARY  
2018, 10.20AM, DOWNTOWN EAST**

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Sister Mary Liew, President, NTUC

Brother Chan Chun Sing, Secretary-General, NTUC

Sister K. Thanaletchimi, President, HSEU

Sister Diana Chia, General Secretary, HSEU

Distinguished Guests

Parents and Award Recipients

1 A very good morning to everyone. I am happy to attend this morning's Bursary Awards Ceremony, held in conjunction with the launch of President's Challenge 2018.

2 Our children are our future. I am glad to be here today to affirm the role of everyone here – families, guardians, and community partners alike – in supporting our children in their journey ahead.

3 This morning's event is even more meaningful because of the life skills and training workshops organised at the side lines of the bursary

ceremony for the families of the award recipients. I hope everyone will make use of these opportunities to arm ourselves with the necessary knowledge and tools, taking full advantage of the resources put together for us. Together with community partners like NTUC, we want to support and equip one another to build a better future for our children.

4 Strong families and communities are integral to building a strong, robust and flourishing society. By providing holistic support to families, we are in fact also doing our part to build a better Singapore.

#### The Evolution of PC with Changing Social Needs

5 Today's event is a good example of how organisations have responded to changing social needs. The bursary ceremony is an effective touch-point for NTUC to reach out to families, and to invite everyone to upgrade our skills and enhance our capabilities. Indeed, as the needs of our society change, support for the less fortunate also has to similarly evolve. Structural changes to our economy, demographic shifts and technological disruptions are reshaping the socio-economic landscape of Singapore. These trends can present both opportunities and threats. For example, automation is fundamentally changing the complexion of our industries. So while these developments have the

potential to accelerate our economy, one key challenge will be how well and quickly Singaporeans can up-skill to keep up with the pace of change.

6 The effects of these changes may in fact vary across different segments of our population. For example, technological disruptions are likely to affect low wage workers disproportionately, because their jobs are the most likely to be displaced. Our support system for the less fortunate must correspondingly evolve to better meet the needs of those who require it the most. An effective response would also have to go beyond direct financial assistance, and move into the building of resilience and self-reliance among those affected.

7 Similarly, President's Challenge has to change with time. When President's Challenge was first initiated in 2000, former President S R Nathan primary aim was to build a culture of contribution, by consolidating fund raising efforts so that more can be done for the less fortunate. In the past five years or so, former President Tony Tan broadened President's Challenge to create a wider definition of giving, in terms of time and skills. These efforts are important, and must continue.

The Next Phase for President's Challenge – Empowering for Life

8 Going forward, we expect our societal needs to be more complex and multifaceted. President's Challenge will have to similarly adapt. We need to activate the community as well as continue to empower citizens. President's Challenge will need to look into more holistic support for the less fortunate, and move beyond generic schemes and programmes. We need to look into more customised and upstream support to help the most vulnerable.

9 For this next phase of President's Challenge, we will have to adopt a sharper focus on key complex social issues. Our main aim should be to empower the vulnerable. As the old saying goes, "*Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day; teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime*". With this new approach, I hope President's Challenge can help disadvantaged groups change their circumstances and bring about more sustained changes to the lives of those we impact.

10 To support this effort, I am happy to announce that President's Challenge will set aside \$10 million over the next five years for a new "**Empowering for Life Fund**" (or ELF in short). The ELF will fund programmes to help the less fortunate, in the areas of skills upgrading, capacity-building and employment. It will focus on supporting customised, dedicated services to the most vulnerable groups, and

facilitate their integration into society. We want to be able to handhold the most disadvantaged families on their journeys to improve their circumstances. This way, we can help them bounce back quickly from setbacks and stay adaptable.

11 One programme that will be funded under the ELF this year is the “**LIFT-UP Pathfinder**” programme. This is a signature pilot programme borne out of a recent partnership between President’s Challenge, NTUC and e2i. Under this pilot, 50 low-income families will be identified for Employability & Skills training. Each family will be guided by a team of dedicated volunteers, who will handhold them in navigating the landscape of available schemes and programmes. NTUC and e2i will also work with training providers to make it practical and convenient for these families to attend training and be equipped with the mind-set and skills for future employment.

12 I am heartened to know that interest for the LIFT-UP Pathfinder programme is already very high. Mdm Chan Nget Hoong who is here with her family shared that she hopes to sign up for the programme. Currently working as a Senior Patient Service Associate with KK Women’s and Children’s Hospital, she has always wanted to upgrade herself, but did not know how to. She is excited by how volunteers of the programme will now

guide her in acquiring new and relevant skills, which she can then use to improve the financial circumstances of her family. I am confident that with such customised support, Mdm Chan, as well as other families supported by the programme, will benefit tremendously. If this pilot is successful, we intend to scale up the programme for more families subsequently.

### A Movement of Care, A Partnership to Empower

13 The LIFT-UP Pathfinder is one programme that will be funded under President's Challenge 2018. This year, we will be raising funds for a total of 59 beneficiary organisations, spanning a wide range of social services, including children and family services, healthcare and eldercare services, disability services, and rehabilitation of ex-offenders. On behalf of all beneficiaries, I would like to thank all for the strong support of President's Challenge over the years.

14 Apart from fund raising, President's Challenge will continue to rally Singaporeans to give not just financially, but also time to care for those around us. More than 87,000 have volunteered since President's Challenge Volunteer Drive started in 2012. We will continue to promote volunteerism in Singapore.

15 Within the group of volunteers, we are seeing more seniors. This is a good trend. Our seniors can still be active contributors to our society and are an asset to our community support ecosystem. President's Challenge will continue to support Silver Volunteerism through Silver Volunteer Fund.

16 I am also heartened to see a positive trend of students and youths contributing to volunteering work under President's Challenge. Not only will this be a good engagement of our youths, but it will also help build a stronger sense of camaraderie and belonging among the youths. On this note, President's Challenge will leverage this momentum to promote more youth volunteerism. Our youths have the energy, skills and passion to do good. Many may be busy with studies and work, but if given the right opportunity will step up to help others. We should encourage them to do so.

Ladies and Gentlemen

17 President's Challenge is a national movement for Singaporeans to show compassion. It is about how we can make a difference to others. It is about helping those in need, and how we can work together to build a cohesive and inclusive society.

18 But more fundamentally, President's Challenge is about Singaporeans partnering one another to build a home we want. A home where we care for each other; a community where we give each other a leg up and empower everyone for life; a nation where we move forward together. So that everyone, regardless of background or starting point in life, has the opportunities to move upward and progress as one united people.

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